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Conservation Commission report, 2003

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

TOWN OF ARLINGTON

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REPORT TO TOWN OF ARLINGTON

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING - 2003

The Arlington Conservation Commission ("ACC") administers the Arlington Wetlands Protection Bylaw and state Wetlands Protection Act. At bimonthly meetings and on-site visits, commission members work to ensure that all construction and development projects and other activities that may alter any wetlands, floodplains, rivers, streams, ponds, and/or lakes are in compliance with state and local regulations. In addition, the ACC manages the Town's conservation lands. Arlington has approximately 30 acres of conservation lands consisting of many individual parcels of varying size.

Below is a partial list of activities and major projects that the ACC oversaw and/or worked on during the last twelve months:

Accomplishments -

- **Arlington Land Stewards.** Modeled in part after Lexington's Citizens for Land Conservation, the ACC, with help from the Open Space Committee, formally launched a program this spring for volunteers, that is, Land Stewards, to assist with monitoring and maintaining the Town's conservation lands, as well as certain parcels managed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and DPW. This program recognizes that often the best caretakers of open space are those who live near and/or use these areas. Over 30 citizens signed up as Land Stewards at the March 19 kick-off meeting. To assist volunteers involved in the Arlington Land Stewards Program, the ACC published the Land Stewards Handbook that contains the new, recently promulgated conservation land regulations, a problem/solution management table, plus contact information. More information about the Land Stewards Program, including the Land Stewards Handbook, is [available online](#).

- **Meadowbrook Park Restoration Project.** In the summer of 2001, the ACC and many volunteers planted over 2,000 plants as part of this major wetlands restoration project that was significantly funded by a state grant. In summer and fall 2002, the ACC monitored the site during the first year of growth and found that the planting was successful. The ACC also maintained the weir located in Mill Brook at Meadowbrook Park, by installing a small fish

ladder and planting willows to prevent bank erosion.

• **Spy Pond.** ACC members joined with volunteers from the Spy Pond Committee, the Arlington High School SAVE group, the Boston Society of Civil Engineers Younger Member Group, and many Arlington residents to mark storm drains in the Spy Pond watershed. This was an effort to educate the public on stormwater pollution, as part of a \$300K three-year grant the Town received for Spy Pond from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. Volunteers spent numerous days attaching colorful markers to demarcate drains near catch basins that flow to Spy Pond. In addition to marking drains, the volunteers placed door hangers on area homes to describe the education program and to discourage dumping and other practices that cause stormwater pollution. Spy Pond suffers from high nutrient loading and other contamination due to its highly developed watershed. Approximately 40 outlet pipes drain into the 100-acre pond, all of which receive no treatment prior to discharging.

• **Arlington Reservoir - Removal of Water Chestnuts.** Last summer, the ACC coordinated and sponsored the third year of a multi-year project to remove water chestnuts from the Arlington Reservoir. Prior to the mechanical harvesting of the plants, volunteers including members of the Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee had hand-pulled plants. Before this project began, the highly invasive water chestnuts blanketed nearly fifty percent of the Reservoir, choking out wildlife. The ACC has requested a fourth year's funding for mechanical harvesting of water chestnuts as this project's ultimate goal is to dramatically improve the overall health of the Reservoir as well as downstream waters in Arlington for an eight- to ten-year period or more.

• **Mystic River Watershed Water Quality Monitoring Network - An Ongoing Study.** The ACC continued its support of the Mystic River Watershed Water Quality Monitoring Network; its long-term project is to systematically monitor the water quality of streams, rivers, and lakes in an effort to better understand the nature and extent of water quality issues in Arlington. Multi-site benchmarks for surface water quality were established in 1997, and via monthly monitoring, data is continuing to be collected that will reveal the impact of pollution and eutrophication in the Town's water bodies. This data will help manage and ensure the long-term health of the Town's natural resources. By 2010, through this partnering effort, the two groups hope to permit resident swimming and fishing in the Mystic River. Towards that goal, further development of this work is being conducted with a website that will display water quality information as it becomes available from automated sampling stations. Go to mysticriveronline.org/.

Goals For FY 2004 and Beyond -

- Expand and promote the Arlington Land Stewards Program.
 - Assist stewardship activity by Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows citizen group.
- Ensure full potential of 183-acre green space at Great Meadows.
- Oversee ongoing harvesting project to eradicate water chestnuts from the Arlington Reservoir.
 - Manage bank stabilization project at Cookes Hollow.
 - Ensure existing docks in all water bodies in Town are in compliance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Arlington Bylaw for Wetlands Protection.

Thanks -

The ACC sincerely thanks all individuals and organizations that contributed directly or indirectly to the activities of its thirty-seventh year. Particular thanks go to all the hard working volunteers who helped with the cleanup of Meadowbrook Park this past summer. The reestablishment of Meadowbrook Park as a thriving, healthy wetlands was made possible due to the perseverance of former ACC members Geraldine Tremblay and Richard Bowler.

Long-time commissioner Geri Tremblay resigned from the ACC this year and will be sorely

missed. We cannot thank her enough for her many years of hard work, dedication, and guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Stevens, Chair, Catherine Garnett, Judith Hodges, Timothy Sullivan, Christine Wallace, David White, and Corianna Beckwith, Conservation Administrator.